

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 03252 200510 Z

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

OMB-01 T-03 RSR-01 GAC-01 /085 W

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R 200420 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2468

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: DIET PROCEEDINGS STALLED BY OPPOSITION SLOWDOWN TACTICS

REF TOKYO 2739

SUMMARY: SINCE MARCH 14, FOUR- PARTY OPPOSITION ALLIANCE HAS SUCCESSFULLY UTILIZED UNUSUAL SLOW- DOWN TACTICS TO STALL LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS IN EFFORT TO EMBARRASS TANAKA GOVT BY BLOCKING PASSAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL BILLS BEING CONSIDERED THIS DIET SESSION. IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT DIET SESSION WILL BE EXTENDED BEYOND SCHEDULED MAY 20 CLOSING DATE, PERHAPS BY AS MUCH AS TWO MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE MARCH 14, VIRTUALLY ALL LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS HAVE BEEN STALLED BY OPPOSITION SLOW- DOWN TACTICS DESIGNED TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR GOJ TO SECURE PASSAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL BILLS BEING CONSIDERED THIS SESSION. FOLLOWING FORMATION OF FOUR- PARTY DIET ALLIANCE ( REFTEL), OPPOSITION ADOPTED A POLICY OF ( A) INSISTING THAT ALL CABINET MEMBERS ATTEND COMPREHENSIVE INTERPELLATIONS ON BUDGET IN UPPER HOUSE AND ( B) REFUSING TO ATTEND LOWER HOUSE SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE SESSIONS UNLESS RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER IS PRESENT. WHILE BOTH OF THESE PRACTICES HAVE BEEN CUSTOMARY IN PAST AS WELL, COMPROMISES HAVE USUALLY BEEN REACHED WHEREBY CABINET MEMBERS HAVE BEEN

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PAGE 02 TOKYO 03252 200510 Z

PERMITTED TO ABSENT THEMSELVES BRIEFLY FROM UPPER HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARINGS IN ORDER TO ATTEND LOWER HOUSE SPECIALIZED COMMITTEE MEETINGS OR LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD DURING BREAKS IN COMPREHENSIVE BUDGET INTERPELLATIONS IN UPPER HOUSE. BOLSTERED BY THEIR NEWLY ESTABLISHED JOINT DIET FRONT, OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE THIS TIME REFUSED TO COMPROMISE IN ANY WAY TO ALLOW LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS TO GO ON. RESULT HAS BEEN THAT NO SUBSTANTIVE COMMITTEE HEARINGS HAVE YET BEEN HELD ON CONTROVERSIAL NATIONAL RAILWAYS AND HEALTH INSURANCE BILLS WHOSE FAILURE TO PASS DURING LAST YEAR'S REGULAR DIET SESSION RESULTED IN CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF FACE FOR SAT GOVT. SITUATION IS FURTHER COMPLI-CATED BY UPPER HOUSE INSISTENCE, RENEWED DURING MARCH 19 MEETING BETWEEN UPPER HOUSE PRESIDENT KONO AND LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER NATKAMURA, ON HAVING AT LEAST TWENTY DAYS TO DEBATE ALL BILLS PASSED BY LOWER HOUSE.

2. COMMENT. ONE OF MAJOR GOALS OF OPPOSITION DIET ALLIANCE IS TO EMBARRASS TANAKA GOVT BY AGAIN BLOCKING PASSAGE OF NATIONAL RAILWAYS AND HEALTH INSURANCE BILLS. OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE MOVED A STEP CLOSER TO THAT GOAL BY STALLING LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS FOR TWO WEEK PERIOD. IN PROCESS, HOWEVER, OPPOSITION HAS UNDERGONE UNUSUAL MEDIA CRITICISM FOR ITS OBVIOUS AND QTE IRRATIONAL UNQTE STALL TACTICS. STRAINS HAVE ALSO APPEARED IN FOUR- PARTY ALLIANCE, SINCE DSP HAS OPPOSED THESE DELAYING TACTICS FROM OUTSET. IN ANY EVENT, OPPOSITION WILL HAVE TO DEVISE NEW TACTICS TO BLOCK DEBATE ON CONTROVER-SIAL BILLS AFTER MARCH 23, WHEN COMPREHENSIVE BUDGET INTERPELLATIONS ARE SCHEDULED TO END IN UPPER HOUSE AND CABINET MEMBERS WILL BE FREED FOR ATTENDANCE AT LOWER HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARINGS. OPPOSITION'S SUCCESSFUL SLOW- DOWN TACTICS COUPLED WITH UPPER HOUSE INSISTENCE ON LENGTHY DEBATE OF BILLS PASSED BY LOWER HOUSE MAKE IT OBVIOUS THAT DIET SESSION WILL HAVE TO BE EXTENDED BEYOND SCHEDULED MAY 20 CLOSING DATE. SOME LDP DIETMEN HAVE SUGGESTED THAT DIET SESSION MAY BE EXTENDED BY AS MUCH AS TWO MONTHS.

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 MAR 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** elyme  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973TOKYO03252  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** n/a  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** TOKYO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t19730336/aaaaifjw.tel  
**Line Count:** 107  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** TOKYO TOKYO 2739  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** elyme  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 NOV 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <05-Nov-2001 by willialc>; APPROVED <21-Nov-2001 by elyme>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971222  
**Subject:** DIET PROCEEDINGS STALLED BY OPPOSITION SLOWDOWN TACTICS  
**TAGS:** PINT, JA  
**To:** EA  
**SECSTATE WASHDC**  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005